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FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

PROGRAM	Crossfire	STATION	CNN-TV Cable News Network
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SUBJECT	Questioning Nicaraguan Visitors		

ANNOUNCER: Crossfire. On the left, Tom Braden. On the right, Cliff Kincaid. In the crossfire, G. Gordon Liddy, former FBI agent; and Democratic Congressman John Conyers of Michigan.

TOM BRADEN: Good evening, and welcome to Crossfire.

Careful now. George Orwell is dead, and so is Joe McCarthy. But Big Brother is still watching. The FBI, according to Director William Webster, has indeed called upon and questioned more than a hundred persons, mostly church people, who have recently visited Nicaragua.

Congressman John Conyers of Michigan thinks this practice is outrageous. Former FBI man G. Gordon Liddy, as you might surmise, approves, with his usual cold passion.

Mr. Liddy, look, the world knows that you are a master of intimidation and that you approve of it. But do you think it's right to get poor little church people who have visited Nicaragua out of the goodness of their faith and in order to inquire into the facts, and come to their workplaces, as the FBI does, and question them? Do you think that's fair or just or American?

G. GORDON LIDDY: As you well know from your former association with the Central Intelligence Agency, anytime anybody visits a nation that is hostile to the United States, the intelligence agencies attempt to interview that person to get any kind of information they can about the health of the leaders of the other nation, about what's going on in their economy.

I would interview Shirley Temple at age 12 if she came

back from Managua tomorrow to find out what I could.

BRADEN: Look, but there's something a little ridiculous about this. These people aren't experts on Nicaragua. They went down there to view the thing, to talk to people on the streets. They're not...

LIDDY: Let's say I was going to be talking to Daniel Ortega the way I'm speaking to you now.

BRADEN: Well, that...

LIDDY: And let's say -- or let's say that I was speaking to any one of the government people and I was able to observe something that led me to believe that you had a particular health problem. That is of interest to our intelligence agencies, as you well know.

CLIFF KINCAID: That's the issue, isn't it, Congressman? I mean you've gotten your face in front of the TV cameras and complaining about the Bureau simply interviewing people who have gone into Nicaragua and come back who may have knowledge of what the Communist regime in Managua is up to. The real issue of harassment here is your harassment of the Bureau, isn't it?

REP. JOHN CONYERS: Well, are you a part of the FBI or CIA? Everybody else here is, but me. Have you got any FBI or CIA background?

KINCAID: Of course not. But I'll tell you this: If the Bureau visited me, I wouldn't be scared of it. I don't have anything to hide.

REP. CONYERS: Just an opening question to make sure we get everybody's backgrounds out on the table.

Now, to your question. Apparently, one reason, probably, Judge Webster wouldn't be happy to see you back in the FBI is because you'd be violating their guidelines, which he tells us and assures the committee that they're observing. One of the things that they can't do is visit friendly little church people and ask them to tell them what they saw or overheard or found out in Nicaragua, which is not one of our enemies at the present moment. We may be getting ready to...

KINCAID: Not an enemy?

REP. CONYERS: We may be getting ready to put economic sanctions on them, which we don't do with South Africa.

But let me just suggest one thing to you. There is

Constitutional Amendment Number One, which says that the right to travel, the right to speak one's opinion, and the right to express their views, even if contrary to the foreign policy of their own country, our country, is a perfectly protectable right.

Judge Webster understands that.

LIDDY: Congressman, let me ask you. Has there ever been a situation amongst any of these hundred people you're mentioning in which an FBI agent came up, identified himself as a special agent of the FBI, asked to speak to him; the person refused, and then the agent insisted and attempted to force him to speak? Is it not true that the individual has the right to just walk away and say, "I don't want to talk to you"?

REP. CONYERS: Well, that's a good point, because if the FBI agent presents himself, first of all, he's got to have some reason. You've got to have some cause, allegation, or information in the FBI, sir, that indicates that the person may have information about a federal crime that may be committed.

You know, the FBI is a domestic police organization, not the CIA.

BRADEN: Let me ask you about that, Mr. Liddy. You are a lawyer, as we all learned at the time of Watergate.

REP. CONYERS: Well, he was a lawyer.

BRADEN: Was a lawyer. All right. I beg your pardon. You're right, Congressman.

But you must know that the FBI, as I understand it, is charged with the investigation of foreign intelligence activities in this country. Now, what is the point, then, of going to some poor little churchwoman who belongs to the Interfaith Committee and saying to her -- calling upon her and asking here if she is engaged in terrorist activities?

LIDDY: Well, I have no information...

BRADEN: That's one of the things that happened.

LIDDY: Are you engaged in terrorist activities?

BRADEN: Are you engaged in terrorist activities? That's what they asked her.

LIDDY: If they asked that question, then I think if you were to look into the files of the FBI, you would probably find some kind of an allegation which might indicate that this person

might be involved in terrorist activities. And it is not the first time, or would not be the first time, as you know, that terrorists would use the church, or anything else like that, as a cover for their activities.

KINCAID: That's right, Congressman. Let's face it. I was flabbergasted by your statement that Nicaragua is not an enemy of the United States. Nicaragua is a base of subversion, of terrorism, and has recently been documented is exporting narcotics to the United States to corrupt our young people.

What are these poor churchwomen, as you describe them, going down to Nicaragua for? Aren't they coming back and propagandizing on behalf of that regime? And doesn't the FBI have a legitimate interest in finding out what exactly these people are up to?

REP. CONYERS: Well, assuming your serious, let me just point out to you, sir,...

KINCAID: I am serious.

REP. CONYERS: Well, I'm making that assumption.

KINCAID: And I want a serious answer.

REP. CONYERS: I'm going to give you as serious an answer as I can.

But the fact of the matter is that the FBI, in the first instance, cannot visit somebody who goes to a country with whom we are not at war. They may be an enemy in your eyes, and that's one of the rights you have under the First Amendment, but they're not an enemy in the eyes of our government. We have diplomatic relations. We are not at war. We're trying to subvert them. We really are covertly at war.

But let's get back to the point.

KINCAID: The Soviet Union has diplomatic relations with the United States, but we recognize them as an enemy.

LIDDY: Did Nazi Germany, at the time when Roosevelt authorized naval warfare against them, in violation of the Neutrality Act -- they had not yet declared war upon us.

REP. CONYERS: May I point out that citizens, in their right to travel -- on this, the Director of the FBI agrees with me. I don't know why I'm arguing with you about it as if we're going to debate the law. The law says -- all right? -- the law that we've already passed says the FBI guidelines prevent them

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from asking anybody, asking anybody about anything about their visits to Nicaragua unless they are suspected of having information about criminal activity, federal criminal activity.

BRADEN: Is the FBI not breaking those guidelines?

REP. CONYERS: Well, of course they are.

LIDDY: There are, at last count, no fewer than 13 bases inside the territory of Nicaragua right now training terrorists. Not just Nicaraguan terrorists. You've got the PLO terrorists. You've got the Baader-Meinhof remnants down there.

BRADEN: Well, that's for the CIA to worry about, not the FBI.

LIDDY: It's for the CIA to worry about what's going on down there. But if an American citizen goes down there and visits and is believed, perhaps, to have visited one of those camps and comes back into the United States, it is then for the FBI to worry about.

REP. CONYERS: Well, wait a minute. Wait a minute. That's why...

[Confusion of voices]

REP. CONYERS: That's why you're not in the FBI, and probably why you're better off not practicing law. The law doesn't state that. That's your opinion, which you're entitled to.

But let me point out, none of the one hundred or more people -- and by the way, that figure has risen now that the subject is being debated and my face is going on television, terrorizing or intimidating the FBI. Now that that is out, we haven't had the FBI come forward with one case in which anybody has been suspected of the criminal activity, alleged or otherwise, that would be the basis of a legal visit.

BRADEN: That's why I'd like to ask Gordon Liddy about this.

Now, look, what he says, I believe, is accurate. And it is reminiscent, to me, of the kind of thing that went on in Watergate, during your era of American history, when people on the White House staff -- Haldeman, Pat Buchanan, and others --were saying to the IRS, "Go get that guy."

KINCAID: Oh, for crying out loud.

BRADEN: It looks to me as though the FBI is going out

harassing people who went to Nicaragua.

LIDDY: It is not the law. And all you have to do is understand, for example, that in a standard investigation of somebody who's an applicant for a position of trust and confidence with the United States Government, they're going to go around and they're going to talk to that individual's neighbors. They're going to knock on the door and they're doing to say, "Mr. or Mrs. Buchanan, we are investigating Mr. So-and-So. We would like to talk to you." And if you don't want to talk to that agent, you can shut the door in his face, and that's the end of it. And in no instance here has anything other than that happened. The FBI has...

KINCAID: The Bureau can't even conduct interviews without being accused of Watergate-type activities.

BRADEN: Wait a minute, Mr. Kincaid.

And wait a minute, Mr. Liddy.

Here I am, a peaceable fellow, and I'm going about my job, and I get a knock on the door and it's the FBI and they want to ask me about a trip I made to Nicaragua six months ago, three months ago, two months ago. And after they've talked to me, and I apparently have satisfied them -- "Yeah, I went down there. I talked to so-and so." -- then they go around to the neighbors and ask the neighbors what they think of me: Any suspicious activities?

Don't you think that is harassment and don't you think it's intimidating?

LIDDY: No, I don't think so at all. The FBI was always very, very careful anytime it went around, when you got information about somebody, to document the information. I remember they gave us the standard example: Don't come back and say that Mr. So-and-So says that Miss So-and-So is a German sympathizer, without giving us the reason. If the reason is that they have a German shepherd dog, you put that in there, and of course it discounts the information.

BRADEN: Well, you were a German sympathizer.

REP. CONYERS: May I get back to Mr. Kincaid's question. He asked...

[Confusion of voices]

LIDDY: I have been accused of being a German sympathizer during the Second World War, the period of which time was between I was 11 and 15. I was not. That's just for the record.

REP. CONYERS: May I get back to the question of what these people are doing down there, touring? Now, the reason the people from SISPEP (?) and MICA (?), these church groups, are going down from Detroit and from Michigan was to find out what the circumstances about the allegations in our foreign policy were. Were there gun-running? Were the Contras the equivalent of American heroes in the Revolution, or were they the murderers? Was there a Marxist economy?

KINCAID: For the record, let it be known...

[Confusion of voices]

BRADEN: For the record, we have to take a break.

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BRADEN: Welcome back to Crossfire. G. Gordon Liddy is defending American police work. And Congressman Conyers of Michigan is defending American liberties. That is the issue here, as we're talking about the FBI's questioning of people who visited Nicaragua.

KINCAID: Well, that's not the issue.

But Congressman, you wanted to make a quick point.

REP. CONYERS: Thank you. I just wanted to conclude with our original discussion by answering your question as to what the people were doing there.

They went to find out if there was any truth to the American foreign policy allegations about Nicaragua. What they found out and came back and said, which apparently ticked off the Reagan Administration no end, is that they weren't running guns, it wasn't a Marxist economy, it was a mixed economy. As a matter of fact, we are their biggest trader. That the Contras were the murderers, and nobody else. And the government was trying to agree with the Contadora process.

So, that's really what got them in trouble and got the FBI...

LIDDY: Don't you think that if that is -- if that is true, don't you think you should tell the FBI that, so the FBI can inform the President?

REP. CONYERS: Well, the FBI doesn't have this job of informing the President. They're violating the law when they go in somebody's house and say, "We understand you went to this country, and we want to find out what you were doing there."

LIDDY: What law? What law? What statute?

REP. CONYERS: The guidelines of the FBI...

LIDDY: The guidelines don't have the force and effect of law, Congressman. You, as a lawyer, ought to know that. And I, as an ex-lawyer, certainly do.

REP. CONYERS: Well, just a moment, sir. The one thing you haven't been is a congressman in your long and famous career.

LIDDY: That's true.

REP. CONYERS: Let me just tell you this. The guidelines were promulgated based on the law. And we, the committee I serve on, review the guidelines. That's what Judge Webster was doing up there getting harassed, as you suggest, by our committee. What we find out was they were violating the guidelines based on the law.

BRADEN: Do you have faith in Judge Webster?

REP. CONYERS: I certainly do. I have a little faith in him.

LIDDY: He has faith in Judge Webster, whom he's attacking. I'm defending Judge Webster, and I don't have any faith in him.

REP. CONYERS: I'm not defending Judge Webster. All I'm saying, I have faith in him. His FBI agents weren't sent out by him to hassle citizens in Detroit. He said, "If they're violation the law, I'm glad you told me, and we'll get it straightened out."

BRADEN: He also said that the FBI visits were not intimidating.

REP. CONYERS: Well, he didn't understand why anybody would take exception to friendly visits from a courteous FBI agent.

KINCAID: I certainly wouldn't. Would you?

REP. CONYERS: And I asked him where he grew up. Because in Detroit and in Washington, it can cost you your job, it can make your neighbors think you're a terrorist or a criminal, and it can create a lot of havoc in one's personal life.

KINCAID: And he also said there was a legitimate foreign counterintelligence operation there.



LIDDY: ...cooperating with your government, cooperating with your local cop, or what have you.

REP. CONYERS: Like you're a stool pigeon. Yeah, it sure could.

But let me say this...

LIDDY: Do you think somebody who's a witness and who reports to the police is a stool pigeon?

REP. CONYERS: I think that the FBI shouldn't be visiting people that go to Nicaragua unless they're suspected of criminal activity. That is the law and the guidelines. And all Judge Webster and I are trying to do is enforce this as reasonably as we can.

Now, if you think it's okay, then we've got to change the law and the guidelines.

KINCAID: Can we put an end to this filibuster for a minute?

REP. CONYERS: Yes, sir.

KINCAID: Judge Webster, as you know, is no Reaganite conservative. He's a liberal. He was appointed by President Jimmy Carter. And for you to pretend that he's engaged in this horrible campaign to intimidate people is just ridiculous. Congressman.

REP. CONYERS: But I'm defending him, sir. Can't you...

KINCAID: You were haranguing him before the TV cameras a couple of weeks ago at your well-publicized hearings, weren't you?

REP. CONYERS: I didn't ask you guys to bring the cameras in. That was your idea, not mine.

KINCAID: Right.

REP. CONYERS: If you don't want to show what the Congress is doing in debates with the FBI,...

KINCAID: You don't like publicity.

REP. CONYERS: ...you don't have to show it. As a matter of fact, you invited me on this program. This wasn't my idea that we come and do this. I thought you wanted me on.

BRADEN: All right. Well now, look, you're

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investigating this.

REP. CONYERS: I mean are you guys anti-TV too?

BRADEN: You're investigating the FBI and Webster. What do you propose to do?

REP. CONYERS: Well, he's reporting -- he's in the process of reporting back to us the nature of the investigations that were conducted by the people that complained to us. If the people have criminal material or they're the subject or object of a criminal investigation, they're perfectly within their rights. If they aren't, then he's prepared to admit that the FBI agents have overstepped their boundaries, which is perfectly fine.

The other thing that's happening is that we've invited anybody who feels that they were visited unnecessarily by their friendly FBI and they resent it, for some reason, that they can report that to us. And we're going to hold a hearing.

Now, isn't that reasonable?

LIDDY: No, because you've left out an entire category of persons whom it is perfectly legitimate for an FBI agent to interrogate. And that is a witness or potential witness. These people went down to Nicaragua. They are witnesses -- your own words -- as to what is purportedly going on down there and what is purportedly not going on down there. That is perfectly within the ambit of the FBI's jurisdiction to interrogate...

REP. CONYERS: Well, that's why you're not on the FBI. It is not within the ambit of the FBI. Judge Webster -- if you read everything we discussed, you ought to read what he said. Thank God he knows that it's not in the ambit. I don't expect you to know.

LIDDY: Judge Webster is a man who did not dismiss a female FBI agent who came back into the country off vacation carrying heroin with her. I would certainly not use Judge Webster as the paragon of what the FBI ought to do.

REP. CONYERS: Well, he just happens to be the current head of it. If you want...

LIDDY: Unfortunately.

REP. CONYERS: ...to replace him, that's another right that you have as a citizen in this country.

BRADEN: I gave you a point of personal privilege a minute ago because you wanted to explain that you were not an

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admirer of Nazism. But I have a question.

Mr. Liddy, in your book Will, your admiral book Will, you write -- and you're not 10 or 11 or 12 years old when you write it -- you said, "We of the FBI, we of the FBI were an elite corps, America's protective echelon, its shutzstoffel (?)." Now, the shutzstoffel is the SS.

Are you glad to see...

LIDDY: Shutzstoffel means protective echelon.

BRADEN: Yes. Are you glad to see our President paying tribute to the SS?

LIDDY: The President is paying tribute to German war dead in a cemetery in which there are 47 corpses of persons who were in the SS. The chief one that the press kept showing --they finally went and interviewed that individual's sister, SS Panzer Grenadier So-and-So. He was drafted at age 17 and was dead about six months later.

BRADEN: Oh, there were some fellows there who were 50.

All right, look, we have to break it up.

REP. CONYERS: Well, Mr. Braden, you didn't expect him to have a different point of view.

BRADEN: We have to break it up. We have to thank you, Congressman Conyers.

And we have to thank you, Gordon Liddy.

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BRADEN: I had thought, Mr. Kincaid, possibly in my innocence, that when we put Gordon Liddy and some of the others in jail, we were through with this stuff. But here we are again, the Reagan Administration intimidating people who disagree with its Nicaraguan policy by sending the FBI out to talk to them.

KINCAID: You know, I just don't understand it. Congressman Conyers has been in the forefront of those people complaining that the Bureau should do more to crack down on Nazi and white hate and Ku Klux Klan groups in this country to make sure they don't engage in terrorism or subversion. And here he is complaining that the Bureau is trying to make sure an enemy of the United States doesn't use our own citizens for intelligence purposes against our own people.

BRADEN: Witness for Peace?